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INFO RHMFISS/18WG CP KADENA AB JA
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RUSFNSG/CDR10THASG TORII STATION JA
RHMFISS/CG FIRST MAW
RUHBABA/CG III MEF CAMP COURTNEY JA
RUHBBEA/CG THIRD FSSG CAMP KINSER JA
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RHMFISS/COMFLEACT OKINAWA JA
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RHOVVKG/COMSEVENTHFLT
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RUYLBAH/DODSPECREP OKINAWA JA
RUESOK/FBIS OKINAWA JA
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA PRIORITY 0289
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA PRIORITY 0971
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/NAVCRIMINVSERVRA OKINAWA JA
RUHBANB/OKINAWA AREA FLD OFC US FORCES JAPAN CAMP BUTLER JA
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE PRIORITY 0365
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO PRIORITY 0321
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0908
RUALBCC/YOKOTA AB HQ USFJ

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NAHA 000025

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 3/11/2033
TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: APPEASEMENT STRATEGY BEHIND REPUTED FRF ENVIRONMENTAL
PROCEDURES DELAY?

CLASSIFIED BY: Kevin K. Maher, Consul General, U.S. Consulate
General, Naha, Japan, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: At the March 6 meeting of the Alliance Transformation Agreement Working Group for Okinawa, GOJ representatives raised the possibility that environmental procedures related to the landfill portions of the replacement facility for Marine Corps Air Station Futenma would be extended and delayed for eight months. Japanese participants assured us that there would be no insurmountable engineering or political difficulties with completing the overall project on schedule. They admitted they anticipated that Okinawan opposition to the project also might delay land-based work in undetermined ways, and promised to provide new timelines. Local media in the weekend papers headlined the story as a year-long delay, while central government officials here told ConGen Naha privately that the eight-month delay was a "worst case scenario." The Okinawa Vice Governor, meanwhile, privately scoffed at these reports and stressed that only a three-month delay would be necessary. The Vice Governor also told us that prefectural and national environmental and defense officials had nearly completed coordination that would allow the Governor to issue permits this month which are needed for the next stage of the environmental impact assessment (EIA) to begin. In view of this conflicting information, we think it is incumbent upon us to yet again stress to the GOJ our expectation that the Okinawa base realignment plan will be implemented as agreed, on schedule, and as a package. End Summary.

12. (C) At the March 6 Alliance Transformation Agreement Working Group for Okinawa (ATAWG-0), Japanese participants presented a new timeline for environmental procedures relating

to the Futenma Replacement Facility (FRF). Japanese officials claimed that because a coral survey covering four seasons had not begun by the end of winter (February 2008), the survey would have to extend to the end of the next winter (February 2009). Compared to the schedule presented at the September 2007 ATAWG-O meeting, the on-site survey and period for drafting the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) both start four months later, and take four months longer, for a total delay of eight months. As a result, the expected date for the prefectural governor's approval for the landfill became late August 2010, which is nearly a year later than the schedule we have been shown to date. This new schedule would put the Governor's permit approval less than 90 days before the next prefectural gubernatorial election. Under current Japanese law, a landfill project cannot begin unless the governor approves.

¶3. (C) ConGen Naha's representative questioned the length of the delay, and noted the foreseeable difficulty of attaining the governor's approval for the landfill shortly before the gubernatorial election. There could be tremendous pressure on the governor not to approve the landfill, even from the conservative Liberal Democratic Party, which will want to retain the seat. The Okinawa left and media will portray the 2010 gubernatorial election as the last best chance for the people of Okinawa to make their voices heard on the FRF, i.e., to prevent its completion. Japanese participants claimed that their hands were tied, as the eight month delay was required by law, and asked the U.S. side just to trust them and their ability to gain the governor's approval for the landfill.

¶4. (C) U.S. Military engineers asked what impact delays in environmental procedures would have on the land-based construction. Japanese officials from Tokyo initially insisted there would be no delay, as the EIS applies only to landfill, but Okinawa Defense Bureau (ODB) participants said they expected the prefecture would "be sensitive" to construction. They

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admitted that they had not yet discussed with the Okinawa Prefectural Government (OPG) any construction that was unrelated to the EIS. Japanese participants insisted that work, including demolition scheduled to begin in April, must be kept under wraps due to "local sensitivities." Note: We found this puzzling, since the contracts for the demolition work have been let and this has been widely reported in the local press. The work will be visible from off-base. End note. The Japanese side agreed to get back to the U.S. side with detailed timelines for land-based work. Japanese officials insisted that the revised schedule would not affect the planned FRF completion date of ¶2014. U.S. Military engineers expressed grave doubts about maintaining the completion date if there were serious delays in sea-based portions of the project, and if the GOJ was hesitating to move ahead on land-based portions.

¶5. (C) After the ATAWG-O meeting, Consul General Maher met separately with MOFA Status of Forces Division Director Iizawa and ODB Director General Manabe. Japanese participants in the ATAWG-O had fully explained neither the justification for, nor the full impact of, the eight-month delay. Iizawa shed no more light on the reasons for the delay, but assured the Consul General that the GOJ would endeavor to ensure there was no overall delay from the 2014 target. The Consul General stressed to Iizawa that failing to meet interim milestones on the FRF could put at risk U.S. political support --and funding-- for other portions of the Okinawa-centered package, including the move of 8,000 Marines from Okinawa to Guam.

¶6. (C) When the Consul General raised the issue with ODB's Manabe on March 6, Manabe seemed unaware of the central government's reasoning behind an eight-month long delay in environmental procedures. He promised to get back to the Consul General on the issue. On March 9, following headline coverage of a reputed one-year delay in the local press, Manabe told the Consul General that an eight-month delay is a worst case scenario, and ODB is still discussing the start date for the next stage of the EIA process with the Okinawa governor's

office. Manabe said he believes it will be possible to keep delays in the environmental process to a minimum. The problem, Manabe said, was that Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura recently directed MOFA and MOD to use an "appeasement strategy" in dealing with Okinawa Prefecture Governor Nakaima. He noted Foreign Minister Koumura and Finance Minister Nukaga are opposing the appeasement strategy, but he was curiously silent on Defense Minister Ishiba's position.

17. (C) On March 10 Okinawa Prefecture Vice Governor Nakazato told the Consul General that reports of a one year or eight month delay are nonsense. Nakazato was adamant that the inability to start coral sampling by the end of February would delay EIA procedures by no more than three months. The only delay, he repeated, would be the need to do the "winter" survey in the next December to February period, vice the immediate past December to February, so there is only a three month overall delay. No other EIA procedures would change. Nakazato added that OPG and ODB officials currently are working the details the requests for permits from the OPG to begin several surveys (such as coral sampling) which will begin the next phase of the EIA process. Nakazato said he expects the details to be completed-and the governor's permits for the surveys to be granted-in this month, March 2008.

18. (C) Nakazato said he had spoken recently with Vice Minister of Defense Masuda about this, and that both Masuda and MOD

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Defense Policy Bureau Director General Takamizawa are well aware of the current state of play and of the fact that only a three-month shift in the timeline is required. When asked why the national government would tell us there will be an eight-month delay, Nakazato dismissed the idea. While it is true, Nakazato said, that the Prefectural environmental advisory committee had asked for a multi-year environmental survey and other measures that could create delays, the governor himself had rejected such requests. Governor Nakaima has not given up on his demand that the runways be shifted seaward, but he nevertheless wants the FRF to proceed as quickly as possible, and is careful not to do anything to delay the EIA. Nakazato said he does not know why, but it appears to him the GOJ is intentionally misleading ("damashite iru") the USG.

19. (C) Comment: We confess that we are confused by the explanations, or lack thereof, from GOJ officials about delays to the EIA process. We are not experts on Japan's EIA procedures, but from what we know we can find no rationale for more than a three-month delay. Based on the ATAWG-O meeting and conversations with GOJ officials, it appeared to us that some national officials had become too focused on Okinawan "sensitivities," and the resulting appeasement strategy, and may have thought it necessary to delay the EIA to satisfy the Governor. But we now have it on good authority from the Vice Governor that the governor's office wants the next phase of the EIA underway this month, and sees no reason for extended delays in environmental procedures. In light of this, we think it is incumbent upon us to yet again stress to the GOJ our expectation that the Okinawa base realignment plan will be implemented as agreed, on schedule, and as a package.

MAHER